



Security Council

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Letter dated 17 April 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Burundi to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to submit the communiqué of the Government of Burundi relating to the visit to Burundi, in April 2015, of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (see annex).

I kindly request that the present letter and its annex be shared with the members of the Security Council as a document of the Council.

(Signed) **Albert Shingiro**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 17 April 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Burundi to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

[Original: French]

Communication regarding the visit of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to Burundi

[Bujumbura, 16 April 2015]

On the occasion of the end of the visit of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, on 15 April 2015, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Burundi hereby wishes to bring the following information to the attention of national and international opinion.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation welcomes the High Commissioner's visit to Burundi from 12 to 15 April 2015, his first visit to Africa since his recent appointment. During the visit, the High Commissioner held fruitful discussions with the authorities of Burundi at the highest level. Among others, he met with leaders of political parties, leaders of civil society organizations, the chair of the Independent National Electoral Commission and the chair of the Independent National Commission on Human Rights.

The visit provided an opportunity for the High Commissioner's interlocutors to raise all matters related to the protection of human rights and the elections in Burundi, and to welcome the significant progress made in that regard. The presence of the High Commissioner alongside the First Vice-President of the Republic raised the profile of a panel discussion on the topic "Human rights and elections in Burundi: for a peaceful electoral process and the full political participation of all citizens", which was held in Bujumbura on 15 April 2015.

However, the Ministry notes with surprise that, despite his discussions with the Government authorities regarding measures taken to ensure free, transparent, inclusive and peaceful elections, the High Commissioner took into account unsubstantiated claims and allegations — which are generally peddled by certain opposition parties and civil society organizations and relayed by certain media outlets — to the effect that there are militias in Burundi belonging to the "Imbonerakure", a youth organization affiliated with the ruling party, and that Burundi "is on the verge of a serious crisis".

The Ministry categorically rejects that apocalyptic view. It reaffirms that peace and security prevail throughout the country, and that there is no reason to fear a crisis in connection with the elections. Every precaution has been taken to ensure that the people of Burundi can take part in free, peaceful, inclusive and transparent elections.

Trusting in the future, the Government of Burundi has invited all of its partners to send observers before, during and after the elections. In this regard, the Ministry stresses that the United Nations Electoral Mission in Burundi (MENUB) is being deployed throughout the country; that the European Union is on track to deploy its observers; and that the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the East African Community and many other friends of

Burundi are sending observers to certify the proper conduct of the elections in accordance with international standards.

The Ministry calls on the High Commissioner to reconsider his statements, which could prejudice the electoral process, and to help the country to progress smoothly towards a successful election.

It has also been claimed that nearly 5,000 people have been displaced to neighbouring countries, particularly Rwanda, owing to instability. The Ministry wishes to inform national and international opinion that such statements were quite simply invented by certain critics of the Government.

Field verifications in Kirundo and Muyinga provinces, and even in the refugee camps in Rwanda, demonstrate that the displaced persons left because of famine or because of rumours that were spread by certain media outlets, and that the figure of 5,000 people was deliberately inflated. The latest statistics, which were confirmed by the Burundian and Rwandan sides on a recent visit of the Burundian authorities to Rwanda, indicate that fewer than 2,000 people are involved, and that refugees are returning voluntarily to their hills of origin in Burundi.

The Ministry recalls that such movements of refugees towards neighbouring countries happen regularly in Burundi before elections. In 1993, some people left for Rwanda on the eve of the June elections. They returned to the country after the elections, having understood that the rumours of a crisis were unfounded. In 2005, almost 10,000 people left on the eve of the vote. They returned to Burundi soon after the elections.

The Ministry denounces this diversionary tactic on the part of certain civil society organizations and media outlets, a tactic that is intended to put the youth organization affiliated with the ruling party on the defensive while at the same time covering up the lurid schemes of the spoilers and of those persons who are fishing in troubled waters. The Ministry recalls that in April 2014, certain politicians and civil society leaders alleged that preparations were being made for a genocide. Those accusations were endorsed by an official of the United Nations Office in Burundi (BNUB), who sent a confidential cable to the United Nations accusing the Government of distributing weapons to civilians, whereas, on the contrary, operations to recover weapons kept illegally by civilians are proving remarkably successful.

The Ministry recalls that in a similar vein, those same civil society organizations and certain private media outlets and politicians have accused the Government of providing military training to youths affiliated with the ruling party in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. They did so in order to force the Government to withdraw from an advanced military position in the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which was consistent with the plan agreed with the Democratic Republic of the Congo to combat forces detrimental to peace in the subregion.

The Ministry further recalls that once the military position was repatriated, Burundi came under armed attack from assailants whom no movement or organization has recognized as its own. The attack, which took place from 30 December 2014 to 4 January 2015, would never have occurred if the common security plan agreed with the Democratic Republic of the Congo had not been abandoned.

The Ministry notes that the organizations that are slandering the youth organization affiliated with the ruling party have continued to use the same diversionary tactics. Certain media outlets and civil society organizations have warned against the distribution of weapons to the youth organization affiliated with the party in Makamba province, in southern Burundi. On the contrary, the defence and security forces, which denounced the rumour, have in fact apprehended a group of youths affiliated with the party Movement for Solidarity and Development (MSD) who had received firearms training in Rumonge municipality. Another MSD activist has been arrested in Bujumbura in possession of a considerable quantity of weapons.

The Ministry reiterates that the Government is determined to guarantee the safety of property and of persons living in Burundi, and to make every effort to ensure that the elections are free, peaceful, inclusive and transparent. The ballot box remains the only option for the stability of the country and its institutions.

The Ministry calls on the national and international community in general, and the High Commissioner in particular, not to give any credence to the rumours and mendacious allegations that generally circulate in Burundi in the build-up to elections.

Lastly, the Ministry takes this opportunity to reiterate its deep appreciation to the High Commissioner for all of his efforts to support Burundi in consolidating peace and improving the protection of human rights while also addressing social and economic rights.
